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REPORT OF THE NINTH MEETING OF THE INTER-AGENCY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE ON THE UNITED NATIONS TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS DECADE IN AFRICA

Lomé (Togo), 12 to 14 February 1986

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A. ORGANIZATION

1. The ninth meeting of the Inter-Agency Co-ordinating Committee for the United Nations Transport and Communications Decade was held at Lomé, Togo from 12 to 14 February 1986 under the Chairmanship of Professor Adebayo Adedeji, Under-Secretary General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa.

B. ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

2. Representatives of the following United Nations organizations and specialized agencies and African inter-governmental organizations took part in the work of the meeting: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), Universal Postal Union (UPU), International Telecommunications Union (ITU), International Maritime Organization (IMO), African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Ministerial Conference of West and Central African States on Maritime Transport (MINCONMAR), Pan-African Postal Union (PAPU), Agence pour la sécurité de la navigation aérienne en Afrique et a Madagascar (ASECNA) and International Labour Organization (ILO). A representative of the Government of the Republic of Togo attended the meeting as observer.

C. OPENING OF THE MEETING

3. The meeting was opened by Professor Adebayo Adedeji, Under-Secretary General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ECA who expressed his own gratitude as well as that of the participants to ECOWAS for hosting the meeting and making excellent arrangements for the work of the Committee. He pointed out that 1986 was the half-way mark of the second phase of the Decade and as such it was time to start thinking of the evaluation of the impact of the Decade which must be made at the end of the Decade.

4. The meeting was an important one as it preceded the fifth Conference of African Ministers of Transport, Communications and Planning and the matters on the agenda of the IACC meeting would also be the preoccupation of the Ministers. The Ministers, therefore expected clearly articulated advice from the IACC on what action to take on these matters.

5. Professor Adedeji then went on to highlight the items of the agenda. In this regard, he indicated that one of the Committee's tasks was to consider the draft progress report on the Decade for 1985 and to fill the gaps that still existed. Secondly, the committee would examine the updating of the second phase programme with a view to making recommendations to the Conference of Ministers as to which project changes were to be accepted in accordance with the guidelines for project admission established by the third and fourth Conferences of Ministers in Cairo and Conakry respectively.

6. A very important agenda item was the one dealing with the report of the Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations (JIU) on the Decade. The report was a balanced one and made an important contribution to the thinking that had to go on about the direction that the Decade ought to take in the few years that remained and beyond the end of the Decade. The report highlighted some of the constraints that had militated against the attainment of some of the Decade objectives, notably difficulties encountered in gathering quantitative data on projects, and, consequently in result evaluation, difficulties in mobilizing financial resources and the problem of the observance of the Decade priorities by the member States. The report had equally highlighted some of the successes such as the preparation of a sound programme of the second phase.

7. The JIU had made four recommendations that were pertinent to the work of the Committee.

8. In his comments on the report submitted to the fortieth session of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General of the United Nations had generally supported the JIU's recommendation and ECA concurred with him. In particular, ECA believed that whether or not there was to be a second Decade would have to depend on an evaluation of the results of the first Decade. Furthermore, the recommended consultations between ECA and the other agencies would have to be exhaustive to be meaningful. At this stage, therefore, all the IACC could do was to recognize the magnitude of the task and accordingly advise the fifth Conference of Ministers about follow-up action to the recommendations of the JIU.

9. Another matter that would be discussed by the IACC was the evaluation of the nine technical consultative meetings that had been organized between 1981 and 1985 as the principal means of mobilizing financial resources for the implementation of the Decade programme. The ECA Secretariat had made a preliminary evaluation that showed the meetings to have been successful to an acceptable degree. There was, however, a need to adapt the resource mobilization mechanisms to the changing times and co-financing meetings had been proposed for the future. Because the active involvement of the agencies in co-financing meetings was crucial for their success, it was important that the IACC give its views on them before they were put into effect.

10. The last substantive item on the IACC agenda was the consideration of the draft agenda for the fifth Conference of Ministers. It was customary for the IACC to endorse the draft prepared by ECA and suggest the necessary amendments.

11. Professor Adedeji concluded by raising the question of the regional programme for Africa in transport and communications for the UNDP Fourth Programming Cycle (1987-1991). ECA would need to have wide consultations with all agencies before making its proposals to UNDP.

12. The next statement was made by Mr. Zaklu Gunubu on behalf of the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, who, unfortunately, could not be present because of exigencies of his duties. Mr. Gunubu welcomed the participants and told them that ECOWAS was honoured to have been able to host the IACC meeting. The staff of the ECOWAS secretariat as well as that of the ECOWAS Fund was ready to render any assistance that members of the Committee might need. He concluded by thanking the Government of Togo for its material assistance that had made the meeting possible and wished the meeting great success.

13. The Chairman then invited any participants that wished to do so to make general statements.

14. The representative of the Pan-African Postal Union (PAPU) thanked ECOWAS for hosting the meeting and for the warm reception accorded all the participants. His organization had successfully completed, with its own financing, five of its six projects. The only project remaining to be financed was the one concerned with the establishment of a postal legislation committee. He would provide the secretariat with PAPU's contribution to complete the 1985 progress report on the Decade.

15. The representative of ITU regretted that his organization's Secretary-General had been unable to be personally present, although he had very much wanted to do so, because of other pressing commitments. He pointed out that ITU had been a very keen participant in the Decade activities right from the proclamation of the Decade by the United Nations General Assembly. Even if the Decade objectives were achieved, Africa would still remain the most deprived continent in telecommunications penetration, particularly so to the rural population. It was therefore important to start looking beyond the Decade and the ITU had already started to do that. Pursuant to a resolution of the 1982 Plenipotentiary Conference, ITU had established an Independent International Commission for World-wide Telecommunications Development whose report "The Missing Link" and recommendations needed to be studied carefully. One of the report's most dramatic conclusions had been that a project that did not take into account the telecommunications requirements risked failure. It was, therefore, necessary not only to provide the "missing links" but also to avoid any "weak links" in the telecommunications network.

16. The ITU representative concluded by thanking ECOWAS for hosting the meeting and ECA for convening it.

D. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

17. The agenda was approved as proposed with the following items;

1. Opening of the meeting

    (a) Statement by the Executive Secretary of ECA
    (b) Statement by the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS

2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work
3. Consideration of the draft UNTACDA Report for 1985
4. Updating of the Phase II Programme
5. Matters arising from the General Assembly's consideration of the JIU report on UNTACDA
6. Evaluation of the Technical Consultative Meetings
7. Consideration of the draft agenda of the fifth Meeting of the Conference of Ministers of Transport, Communications and Planning
8. Date and venue of the next meeting
9. Any other business
10. Adoption of the report
11. Closure of the meeting

E. SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

Draft UNTACDA Report for 1985 (Agenda item 3)

18. The draft report (document DEC/TRANSCOM/86/1) was introduced by the ECA secretariat. It was agreed that any amendments made in subsequent discussions of the committee would be incorporated into the report and approved during the meeting.

19. The discussions were conducted chapter by chapter. There were no amendments to chapters one (Overview and Summary) and two (Implementation at the National Level). Amendments were made to chapter three (Implementation of Regional and Subregional Projects) by the following members: MINCONMAR, ITU, IMO, ECOWAS and AFCAC.

20. Chapter four (Contributions of the Specialized Agencies and Intergovernmental Organizations) benefited from substantial amendments by ILO, MINCONMAR, IMO, ECOWAS, ICAO, PUPU and ASECNA. When the Chairman raised the concern that contributions on telecommunications did not appear adequate in this chapter, the ECA secretariat responded that these contributions were discussed under Chapter three and therefore were not repeated in Chapter four.

21. Discussions on Chapter five (International Co-operation and support) were focused on the issue of inclusion of more detailed information in the progress report on the financial contributions made by the different exteranl sources to the Decade programme. It was agreed that, although it was necessary to keep the report as short as possible, note was well taken by ECA on the suggestion.

22. Another issue was the need for a detailed analysis of the status of physical implementation of the projects. Despite the lack of information on project status that ECA is faced with, it was agreed that a more detailed analysis could still be performed based on the available data. Future reports should reflect this recommendation.

23. It was further agreed that the title of the report should be changed to «Annual Progress Report, 1985». Finally it was also decided that the 1985 final report shouldbe submitted to the upcoming fifth Conference of African Ministers of Transport, Communications and Planning in Harare.

Updating of the Phase II Programme (Agenda item 4)

24. After the Secretariat introduced the report on the updating of the Phase II programme (document DEC/TRANSCOM/IA/86/3) the Chairman asked what the IACC was expected to do about the report. It was observed that the report in its current form did not present the proposed updates according to the criteria that had been set for admission of project changes and/or new projects into the Decade programme. Therefore ECA was instructed to write a more comprehensive report for the fifth Meeting of the Conference of African Ministers of Transport, Communications and Planning in Harare showing, in particular, the following categories of the project revisions based on the Cairo and Conakry criteria:

- Projects on which sufficient information was provided and met the established criteria for inclusion in the programme.

- Projects on which the available information is not sufficient for ECA to make any recommendation.

- Projects which do not meet the established criteria for inclusion in the programme.

25. With these conditions, the report would be more useful to the Ministers in making the decision of whether or not to accept the proposed changes to the Phase II programme.

Matters arising from the General Assembly's consideration of the JIU report on the Decade (Agenda item 5)

26. Introducing the document DEC/TRANSCOM/IA/1986/4, a member of the secretariat indicated that the inspector had raised several issues and made some recommendations in his report. He mentioned four of these recommendations on which the United Nations Secretary General had made some remarks, namely recommendations no. 3, 4, 5 and 6.

27. During the discussions following the introduction, the representatives of UPU, ICAO, ILO, ITU and IMO made some suggestions and remarks.

28. All the organizations supported the comments made by the United Nations Secretary General, as well as the recommendations made. They however suggested that the matter be submitted to the Conference of African Ministers of Transport, Communications and Planning at its forthcoming meeting in Harare for it to indicate the criteria for preparing the medium- and long-term plan mentioned in recommendation no. 3.

29. Thus, a draft plan would be prepared and submitted to the next meeting of the co-ordinating committee.

30. One organization asked for clarification on the significance of the medium- and long-term plan and the reason for the two-year period of reflection; because the time lag between now and the end of the Decade did not allow for a long-term plan, and it was premature to envisage a two-year period of reflection, three years before the end of the Decade. Summing up the discussion, the Executive Secretary of ECA underscored the following points:

(i) The Conference of Ministers should be consulted at Harare for guidelines concerning the preparation of the medium- and long-term plan. In this connection a note including the comments made by the members of the IACC and a work programme for the period 1986-1988 should be submitted to the ministers. The consideration of Decade projects should continue but an evaluation process should also be started and the methodology and scope of the evaluation defined - such work was the responsibility of all the organizations.

(ii) ECA should prepare a document expounding its role as lead agency for the Decade and distribute it to the other members of the IACC. The first draft of the document should be ready in September 1986 and sent to the organizations in October for their comments. ECA should then prepare a synthesis report which will be discussed at the next IACC meeting.

(iii) A period of reflection and analysis would be necessary at the end of the Decade; the Ministers could be asked to express their views on the matter. The organization of an extraordinary meeting of Ministers could also be envisaged before 1988, the year marking the end of the Decade.

(iv) As regards the medium- and long-term plan, ECA should prepare a document outlining the role it would like to play in the long term, whether or not a second Decade was declared.

31. The inspector was not limiting himself to the second phase of the Decade. He observed that what had been done so far was too restricted and that the role of lead agency should be defined more clearly, with the approval of the other institutions.

An evaluation of the technical consultative meetings (Agenda item 6)

32. A representative of the secretariat introduced document DEC/TRANSCOM/IA/86/6 on the above subject. He pointed out that the ECA staff had made a preliminary evaluation of the nine technical consultative meetings and had pointed out their weaknesses and strengths. Generally the conclusion was that the meetings had not been as successful as they might have been and a new mechanism called co-financing meetings in which the number of projects would be smaller and would be confined only to projects in transit transport corridors or to large regional investment projects had to be introduced. Furthermore, the success of co-financing meetings would depend on the commitment of the countries concerned in the projects as well as prior commitment of one or more donors to some component of the package.

33. A number of agencies (ECOWAS, ICAO, PAPU, ILO and IMO) took the floor on the matter. It was generally accepted that the technical consultative meetings could have been more successful if:

(a) there had been greater efforts to make donors aware of the importance of the projects beforehand;

(b) the project profiles were more detailed to convey the economic and social impact of the projects;

(c) there had been a consistent mechanism for the follow-up of the interest expressed by the donors at the meetings.

34. After an exhaustive debate on the item it was recognized that the paper prepared by ECA had attempted to do two things: first, to make a preliminary evaluation of the meetings and, secondly, to propose a new formula for mobilizing financial resources. As to the former, the paper needed to be improved for the fifth Conference of African Ministers of Transport, Communications and Planning so as to address the many unanswered questions such as the reasons for the decline of interest in the meetings, the non-participation of certain major donor countries, the support given to the meetings by member States etc.

35. As to the proposal of a new formula of co-financing meetings, it was recognized that while they represented an improvement over technical consultative meetings, they were not a panacea as they addressed themselves largely to transport projects in transit corridors, or to large regional projects, and efforts had to continue to be made to find financing for other projects including the small regional ones. In any event whatever the resource mobilization method used, the three conditions for success stated above must be met.

36. In conclusion, the meeting agreed that the evaluation needed to be improved, taking into account the participants' comments, and to be presented to the fifth Conference of African Ministers of Transport, Communications and Planning in Harare, Zimbabwe, where agencies would help the Ministers by contributing to the debates on this very important subject.

Consideration of the draft agenda of the fifth Conference of African Ministers of Transport, Communications and Planning (Agenda item 7)

37. This item was introduced by the Chairman who suggested several changes to the proposed agenda. The following provisional agenda was recommended:

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work
3. Annual progress report on the implementation of UNTACDA, 1985
4. Progress report on the implementation of the resolutions of the fourth Conference of African Ministers of Transport, Communications and Planning
5. Progress report on the feasibility study on the Regional African Satellite Communication System
6. Matters arising from the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on UNTACDA
7. Evaluation of the Technical Consultative Meetings on UNTACDA
8. Updating of the Phase II UNTACDA Programme
9. Report of the ninth meeting of the Inter-Agency Co-ordinating Committee on UNTACDA
10. ITU Report of the Independent International Commission for World-wide Telecommunications Development
11. Report of the Air Transport Committee established by the Mbabane Declaration
12. Date and venue of the next meeting
13. Any other business
14. Adoption of report and closure of meeting

Date and venue of the next meeting (Agenda item 8)

38. It was agreed that the next meeting of the IACC would be held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in January 1987.

Any other business (Agenda item 9)

39. Some members indicated that they had not yet received invitations to the Meeting of Experts to be held in Harare preceding the fifth Conference of African Ministers of Transport, Communications and Planning. The ECA secretariat was instructed to send telexes to all relevant international organizations.

Adoption of the report (Agenda item 10)

40. The draft report was adopted after amendments.

Closure of the meeting (Agenda item 10)

41. The Chief of the Transport, Communications and Tourism Division of ECA, speaking on behalf of the Executive Secretary, thanked all the agencies which took part in the meeting for their continued and important contribution to the Decade programme. He said that the report of this meeting, which he deemed to be very important, would be presented to the Ministers in the upcoming meeting in Harare. On behalf of the Executive Secretary of ECA, he invited all the members of the IACC to attend the Harare Meeting.